

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This School Attendance Policy applies to all primary and secondary Catholic schools managed and operated by Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (**DOSCEL**) in the State of Victoria (**Schools**). This Policy also applies to the DOSCEL Secretariat.

In accordance with the *Education Training and Reform Act 2006* (Vic.) (**the Act**) and the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic.) (**Regulations**), school attendance is compulsory for children and young people aged from six to 17 years unless an exemption from attendance has been granted.

Whilst ensuring student attendance at school is a legal obligation of parents, guardians and/or carers, supporting students to attend school each day is the shared responsibility of all parents, guardians, carers, students, the school and the wider community.

School attendance is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks.

2.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure:

- all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a school registered by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (**VRQA**) and attend school every day the school is open for instruction, and
- the provision of active support for full student attendance and retention until the completion of Year 12 or its equivalent and respond to individual student circumstances when regular attendance is not consistent.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Attendance: A student is considered to be in attendance at school when onsite and/or involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school (for example, remote learning, an excursion or camp). A student is also considered to be in attendance when the student is engaged in a re-engagement program or another school part-time to make up full-time attendance, and the schools or education settings have agreed the time fractions, allocation of Student Resource Package (or other funding) and the educational plan for the student.

Parent, Guardian and/or Carer: Includes “a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides”.

School Attendance Officers: In the context of attendance, School Attendance Officers are empowered through the Act to issue School Attendance Notices, School Enrolment Notices and Infringement Notices.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Parent, Guardian and/or Carer

Parents, guardians and/or carers must enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school and ensure the child attends at all times when the school is open for instruction, unless an exemption from attendance has been granted.

For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent, guardian and/or carer must promptly provide an explanation for the absence on each occasion to the school.

4.2 Students

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled during normal school hours every day of the gazetted school term, unless there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student, or the student is registered for home schooling and has partial enrolment.

4.3 Principal

The principal must ensure:

- Daily attendance of each student enrolled at the school is recorded at least twice a day in primary schools and for every class in secondary schools.
- Any absences of a student from school, including classes, are identified.
- Reasons for each student’s absence are provided and recorded in writing.
- Explanations for absences that are provided, are a reasonable excuse for the purposes of their responsibilities under the Act.
- Follow up any unexplained absences of a student by **contacting the parent, guardian and/or carer of the student as soon as practicable on the same day.**
- Parents, guardians and/or carers are notified promptly regarding a student's unsatisfactory school or class attendance. If, upon being notified of their child's absence or contacted to seek an explanation, a parent, guardian and/or carer reports that the child was not living with them on that day, the school should ensure they notify another parent, guardian and/or carer who was responsible for ensuring the child attended school on the relevant day(s).
- If contact cannot be made with the parent, guardian and/or carer, contact should be made with the emergency contact(s) nominated on the student's file held by the school.

- Information regarding a student's unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes is recorded on their student file.
- Parents, guardians and/or carers are informed of their responsibilities around attendance and initiatives aimed at promoting parental awareness of the importance of children attending school every day are implemented
- Attendance improvement strategies, interventions and levels of adjustment are implemented where the absence is having a significant impact on a student's educational achievement and development, including an Attendance Student Support Group, Personalised Learning Plan, Student Absence Learning Plan and Return to School Plan.
- Strategies for supporting attendance of students in out-of-home care, experiencing homelessness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (**ATSI**) families, overseas students, students with disabilities, students with cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and newly arrived families are implemented.
- The DOSCEL Secretariat is advised where a referral to a School Attendance Officer is required because the student has been absent from school on **at least five full days** in the previous 12 months without reasonable excuse for absences.
- Referral processes are implemented to Child FIRST or Child Protection, the DOSCEL Secretariat and the School Attendance Officer where required.
- Where the school becomes aware that there are issues relating to the wellbeing and safety of a child or group of children or concerns regarding a risk of family violence arise, the school must consider whether it is appropriate to make a request for information sharing under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (**CISS**) or Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (**FVISS**). For further information, see: [Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Contextualised Guidance](#), [Child Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines](#), [Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines](#), and [Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework](#).

4.4 DOSCEL Secretariat

The DOSCEL Secretariat must ensure:

- Schools maintain student attendance records, identify and follow up unexplained absences and develop procedures to support and maintain attendance in accordance with the Act.
- The Deputy Director Catholic Identity, Leadership, Learning and Teaching, DOSCEL, in conjunction with the school principal, may authorise an exemption and provide written approval for student attendance or attendance and enrolment to be exempt or reduced to less than full time.

5.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Schools actively support student attendance and retention.
- Schools maintain student attendance records, identify and follow up unexplained absences, and develop procedures to support and maintain attendance in order to meet the duty of care owed to students, as well as the requirements of the Act and Regulations.

6.0 REFERENCES

- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic.\)](#)
- [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 \(Vic.\)](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic.\)](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety \(Information Sharing\) Regulations 2018](#)
- [Family Violence Protection Act 2008 \(Vic.\)](#)
- [Family Violence Protection \(Information Sharing\) Regulations 2018](#)
- [Child Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines](#)
- [Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines](#)
- [Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework](#)
- [Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Contextualised Guidance](#)
- [School Attendance Guidelines - 2018](#) issued by The Hon. James Merlino MP, State Minister for Education
- [Department of Education and Training Policy Advisory Guide - Attendance](#)

7.0 RELATED POLICIES

- DOSCEL Enrolment Policy
- DOSCEL Pastoral Care Policy
- DOSCEL Child Protection and Safety Policy

8.0 REVIEW

Implementation Date: April 2018

Updated: April 2021

Review Date: April 2022